



University of Tennessee, Knoxville

TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

Chancellor's Honors Program Projects

Supervised Undergraduate Student Research
and Creative Work

Spring 4-2000

Adventures in Song Writing

Matthew Anthony Treglia
University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj

Recommended Citation

Treglia, Matthew Anthony, "Adventures in Song Writing" (2000). *Chancellor's Honors Program Projects*.
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_chanhonoproj/435

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Supervised Undergraduate Student Research and Creative Work at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chancellor's Honors Program Projects by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: Matthew Treglio

College: Arts + Sciences Department: Mathematics

Faculty Mentor: Marilyn Kallet

PROJECT TITLE: Adventures in Song Writing

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Marilyn Kallet, Faculty Mentor

Date: 4/14/2000

Comments (Optional):

This is a very rich, readable manuscript that traces the evolution of a fine poet/songwriter. The writing itself is clear and detailed, and it maps a journey that has many discoveries, obstacles, and insights. The poems themselves are delightful, filled with surprising lines, rhythmically coherent. I have yet to hear the CD of the songs - for me, that will be the icing on the cake. I really enjoyed reading this manuscript!

MK

Adventures in Song Writing

Matthew Treglia

University Honors 458, Section 92123

Dr. T. W. Broadhead

15 March 2000

Introduction

It was December 1997. I had not written a poem in four years. I had read some poetry a few months earlier, but not out of personal interest. Poetry was an integral part of freshman literature, which is a requirement for a bachelor's degree, which is a prerequisite for any decent job. Reading poetry was another mandatory step toward a successful career, like learning to play golf or joining a fraternity. So then one might wonder why I suddenly developed an overwhelming interest in poetry. The answer was simple—to woo women.

I was looking for a way to build a more sensitive image, but I could not sing or play the guitar or make pottery. I had no artistic skills of any kind, but I knew that what I lacked in artistry I made up for in memory. I could memorize anything—conversion factors, U.S. Presidents, Super Bowl champions, Metallica lyrics, anything—so I figured it would be no problem to commit to memory a vast repertoire of love poems that I could recite whenever the opportunity arose. I could just hear the girls saying “Wow, I never realized how sensitive you are.”

I started with the classics—“Cherry Ripe,” “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love,” “To His Coy Mistress,” and “The Word Plum.” I was fully aware that reciting love poems would be incredibly corny, but I was willing to endure a little shame for experiment's sake, so I tested my new stratagem on my next date, and, to my surprise, I was modestly successful. Within a couple weeks I knew enough love poetry to start my own line of greeting cards, but I felt unbalanced, so I started memorizing other poems. I memorized poems of injustice, like “A Dream Deferred,” poems of mistrust, like “Song” by John Donne, poems of majesty, like “The Tyger” and “The Eagle,” and poems of atrocity, like “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” and “Dulce et Decorum Est.”

By January 1998, I had read nearly every poem in my literature textbooks and had memorized everything I thought worth keeping. I thought I knew everything there was to know about poetry, until the night I saw my first poetry slam. I realized immediately that slam poetry was far more dynamic and relevant than the classic poetry I had been reading, and, although its scope was not boundless, it did greatly expand my concept of what poetry is. I learned that a poem is not just a clever arrangement of rhyming words or a set of poignant images. A poem is anything that moves you. It can be a testimony, a rant, a reflection, or an absurdity.

Experiencing that first slam was a blitz of new ideas. I was so inspired, I wrote an original love poem soon afterward.

I saw about ten slams that year and gained more and more appreciation for those poets, for they were judged not only on their writing skill, but also on their speech and performance. Seeing the intensity that the slam brought out in its competitors, I knew that I had to compete on the slam stage, at least once. By the end of the year, I had a reasonable understanding of the strategies involved in winning a poetry slam, but I lacked one vital ingredient—original poetry. I did have that one love poem, but it was not a performance piece. I had lots of ideas for slam poems, but I never took the initiative to set aside the time necessary for turning those ideas into poetry.

My grand opportunity came when I found that an English professor named Marilyn Kallet would be teaching an honors seminar in slam poetry for the spring semester of 1999. I registered for the course without a second thought, knowing that if my grade depended on it, I would definitely write some poetry. I was at home during Christmas break when I told my friend, Dylan Wood, about the poetry seminar I would be taking. Dylan was a serious musician and songwriter but had not written any great lyrics, so he asked me to try to write some lyrics to accompany his music. It seemed an interesting notion, since I knew absolutely nothing about music theory and could neither play nor write music.

I kept Dylan's request in mind as I started the semester. I did fancy the idea of writing a song that could possibly be heard by millions of people, but I saw slam poetry as a more realistic opportunity to impact people. Besides, I considered slam poetry to have more literary merit than lyrics. Consequently, I devoted my creative efforts exclusively to writing slam poems. The first couple poems came with difficulty, but the act of writing itself made me much more receptive at the February slam, for I was listening more as a student than a spectator. The next day, I wrote three poems, and I felt as though I had found my voice.

Weeks passed and I found myself back in Smyrna for spring break. I remembered my promise to Dylan, and, though I still considered song lyrics to be an inferior genre, I decided I could compromise my artistic principles for a chance at rock stardom. Dylan and I decided to set aside an evening to collaborate. Neither of us realized what we were about to get into.

I started the evening's session with a slam poem, hoping that Dylan would magically turn my prosy words into a fine piece of music, but there was no such spark of inspiration. Apparently, we would need a different approach. I asked him to play some tunes. I had hoped to hear the music and then create lyrics that would capture the appropriate mood of the guitar melody but in the rhythm of a suitable countermelody. However, I could not help but construct words in the rhythm of the guitar melody itself, which just does not work. Nevertheless, I was undaunted. Realizing that I could not write lyrics to accompany music, I knew that the only way for us to collaborate would be for Dylan to write music to accompany my lyrics. I had no idea what topics to write about, so I asked Dylan to play some more tunes in hopes that I could extract the essential moods of the music and write something that captured those moods. I listened for a while and went home, my head swirling with ideas. The next morning I wrote the following song:

Long Afternoon

Start drinking at dawn
Play songs to pass time
Don't know where you've gone
I'll never see why

Have to shut out the sun
To forget your rare smile
Say a prayer that you'll come
Then I cry for awhile

{bridge}
The clock on my wall
The watch on your wrist
Tick, tick in my brain
The pound of a fist
I wait for your call
This unending day

CHORUS

All I feel is
All I need is
All I believe is
A way to maybe make it through this sunny
Sunday afternoon
A way to maybe make it through this lazy
crazy afternoon

Your fragrance still lingers
For so many days
Can't bear to hear singers
Of songs you once played

I wish I could do something
To kill this painful time
But I just keep on strumming
Can't get you off my mind

I wanted to write something to which Dylan could relate, so I chose an incident from his life to write about. Jennifer, his girlfriend of four years, had left him a few months before, and he spent his days shut up inside with the blinds drawn, wallowing in self-pity. He refused to play any cd's; he said all the songs sounded like they were written for him. He did nothing but drink beer, play guitar, and talk about Jennifer, for every topic, no matter how remote, seemed to remind him of her.

I wanted to make Dylan's job of writing the music as easy as possible, so I deliberately used a simple, consistent rhyme scheme. Reading it to him later that day, it sounded like a nursery rhyme—rubbish from a spoken word standpoint—so I gave it to him to do with as he wished.

When I went to Dylan's house the very next day, he was full of enthusiasm. I was surprised to find that had he already used my lyrics to write a song, and a pretty good song at that. Hearing my words set to the sweet sound of an acoustic guitar made me reconsider my haughty attitude toward song lyrics. I realized that music was simply another means of expression, a powerful medium that could add a completely new dimension to my words—a dimension that even the best slam poetry lacked. I had thought of lyrics as weak poems that could not stand on their own but needed music to support them. While it is true that music is often used to cover up shoddy lyrics, it can also be used to enhance the expressive power of good lyrics.

With a newfound respect for song lyrics, I intended to write a song that a poet could be proud of; however, it takes inspiration as well as intention to create a masterpiece (at least that is what I have heard), so I knew I would have to be patient. Besides, I still had much to learn about writing poetry, and I did not want to overwhelm Dylan with something overly complex. On March 21, a few days after writing "Long Afternoon", I wrote a simple piece called "First Day of Spring."

First Day of Spring

Little song bird fly
Sing me a song of an immortal spring life
Sing a lullaby

Twirling smiling girl
Sing me a song of an inviting spring world
Let your dress unfurl

Sunshine rainbow art
Sing me a song of a melodious harp
Melt this frozen heart

Fragile yellow rose
Sing me a song in an aroma of notes
Stimulate my nose

CHORUS

In the blue-black cold of winter ruin
I forgot what it means to be alive.
But today, the dawn of natural beauty,
My inanimate love will be revived.

It was the last day of spring break (and the second day of spring) when I submitted this song to Dylan, so I would have to wait a few weeks before I could hear the accompanying music. Nevertheless, I had no reason to wait before writing more lyrics, especially since Dylan and I were working independently. As I was driving back to Knoxville, I began writing a silly rap tune, which I completed the next day. I entitled the piece "Dive" and sent it to Dylan a few days later with the following message: "Try to put some music to these words, but, if you think it's beyond the limits of good taste, I'll understand."

Dive

I know of two kinds of men in the world: some eat fish, some who don't.

I'm a tuna fish salad eatin' man on a mission craving tasty, tender salmon pink and red lobster bisque, and all the fish in the world will make a line for my mouth with my tongue wetting lips; want to find some juicy trout.

I'll take a fish on a plate or a dish
I've got a wish for the taste of a kiss

From the clams that I eat, you think I'm weird
I like to suck on the juice from the beard

I eat it all from the fins to the gills
I like the juice on my chin so I will
Say it again

I'm a tuna fish salad eatin' man on a mission craving tasty, tender salmon pink and red lobster bisque, and all the fish in the world will make a line for my mouth with my tongue wetting lips; want to find some juicy trout.

Dylan said he earnestly tried to fit some music to these words but eventually decided that the piece was indeed beyond the limits of good taste. He asked me, "That song isn't about some seafood extravaganza, is it?" "No, Dylan, it's not about some seafood extravaganza."

On the last day of spring break, before I had left Smyrna, Dylan had been complaining about how Jennifer continually changed her mind. I said, "Oh, she's just capricious." Dylan did not know exactly what "capricious" meant, so we consulted the dictionary, and every definition seemed to fit perfectly. I knew that a song had to be written. About a week later, I wrote the following song:

Capricious

Used to be dependable
My baby was great
So agreeable
But now she's a flake

She's capricious! she comes and goes
Capricious! from hot to cold
Capricious! stop and go
Capricious! on a dead-end road

(I'm) stuck on her mood swing
Too high to jump off at the top
(There's) no way to save me
Too fast at the bottom to stop

She's capricious! changing her mind
Capricious! wasting my time
Capricious! changes her mood
Capricious! like phases of the moon

(Like) picking petals from a daisy
My baby loves me
Or maybe, maybe, . . .
She loves me not

She's capricious! she comes and goes
Capricious! from hot to cold
Capricious! stop and go
Capricious! on a dead-end road

A few days after I mailed “Capricious” to Dylan, Jennifer called me to tell me what she thought of the song. Apparently, she was not very flattered. I had to explain to her that the word “capricious” does not necessarily carry a negative connotation (although it often does). Interestingly, Jennifer told me recently that Dylan still calls her “capricious”. I can only guess which connotation he is using, but at least I know my lyrics are being put to practical use.

When I returned to Smyrna a couple weeks later, Dylan played for me his rendition of “First Day of Spring.” He had written a beautiful, lyrical melody, and, even to this day, I consider it one of his best.

By the time I made it home a second time, Dylan had quit his job and purchased a bunch of recording equipment, which had taken over a good portion of his house. I felt flattered to know that he had done so in large part because of my lyrics. He excitedly played for me the product of about a month of work—a complete recording of “Long Afternoon,” including two vocal tracks, drums, bass, shaker, and electric guitar with wah-wah pedal. It was certainly different from the original version he had played for me on his acoustic guitar a month and a half earlier. I would never have imagined using a *wah-wah* sound with that particular song, but I had to admit—that new version was a change for the better. It had a more dramatic vocal melody with more variation, and the faster tempo made it more energetic.

Then he showed me what he had done with “Capricious.” It sounded like slow, dreary death metal and would have been more appropriate for a song called “Malicious” or “Psychotic.” I did not like the idea of my words turning into something so dark, so I suggested we rework the song.

From the outset, I had intended to concentrate on bright topics like peace, love, and happiness, but when I heard “Capricious”, I got the impression that Dylan was focusing on darker emotions. To boost his spirits and hopefully inspire him in a positive direction, I wrote another song based directly on his life. This time the topic was his three-year-old son, Gaelyn.

Ooh, Child

When clouds fill the sky
On cool autumn days
My son's angel eyes
Lend blue to the sky
Shine a blue loving gaze up at me

His soft golden hair
The sun's beaming rays
Lend warmth to the air
Pull hope from despair
Shine down through the rain down on me

This boy's purest love
As bright as his smile
A gift from above
Like light from the sun
This wonderful child looks to me

CHORUS

Innocent as the world before time began
Ignorant of man and crime and sin
I pray for rebirth
To forget what I've learned
To live with the bliss of a child again

Dylan soon wrote a decent tune to go with those lyrics, but he later opted to use the tune to accompany lyrics written by Chris Anders, a mutual friend. When Dylan told me he had decided to use Chris's lyrics instead of my own, I was a bit jealous; however, after I heard Dylan play the tune with Chris's lyrics, I could not help but agree with his decision. After all, it would be senseless to compromise good music for the sake of personal interests.

When I returned to Knoxville for summer school, I used my abundant free time to write some serious song lyrics as well as slam poems. I decided it was time to move beyond the simple rhyme schemes I had been using in lyrics up to that time and use more complex rhyme schemes similar to what I would use in a slam poem. My efforts yielded the following piece:

Fool's Gold Desire

We met before dawn
On a cool summer morning.
The first light of sun
Urged us onward ahead,
Kissed our light soles, adorning
Our west desert steps.
(Singeing beat of our feet
In the dry rising air)
Toward oblivion walking,
Unaware of the heat,
We were too young to care.

CHORUS

Lost on a stretch of west desert highway,
We've travelled too far to follow.
Lured by the catch of fools' gold desire,
Don't know where we'll be tomorrow.

Led by our shadows,
The sun urged us into
The desert forsaken
And scorned our steps, followed
By temper and hatred.
(We) forgot why we came here
To start with. We pray then
For strength to live on through
This day, thinking maybe
That things will be better
Tomorrow. We're chasing
The sunset and faking
It's dawn, but too late.
We've been staring too long
At the glare in the sky.
We'd be better off in darkness
Than entranced by the lies . . .
That led us here to start with.

"Fool's Gold Desire" is an allegory. The day long journey into the desert taken by these travelers symbolizes the classic scenario of a young couple naively falling in love under false pretenses and then being stuck in a decadent relationship. The sun represents the blinding, illusory love that sparks any hasty romance.

A couple of weeks after mailing "Fool's Gold Desire" to Dylan, I went home to see what progress he had made, but he seemed unable to cope with the song's nontraditional rhyme scheme.

After finishing summer school in July, I returned to Smyrna to enjoy the rest of the summer break. I went to Dylan's house one day, and he and Jennifer were at each other's throats again. I do not remember the exact nature of the argument, but I do remember Dylan saying something horrible, albeit truthful. I remember cringing and thinking, "He could have said that in a much nicer way; he's going to regret that tomorrow." I was in no position to intervene, so I quietly took note of the incident and used it as the basis of my next song.

Kinder Words

No lover left to hold but regret
I chose the wrong way to say what I meant
Left with the sting of things that I said
I said what I meant but used words that were
 heedless
Could have spoken more kindly but
 neglected your feelings
Can't wipe up the words I've spilt
Can't recant the pain I've dealt
Hurt flows freely from stupid mouths
Can't wipe up the words I've spilt

CHORUS

And words are just words
But words can start wars
When worlds pried apart collide
Too many times I've apologized
'Cause that's just more words
Let my actions decide.

{bridge}
Maybe too much to drink
Maybe no time to think
Can't take back what I said
When we argued last night
Truthful words sometimes sting
Sometimes better to lie
Or leave some things unsaid

Dylan could obviously relate to this song, for, within 24 hours of receiving the lyrics, he had devoted his every effort to writing and recording music to accompany those lyrics. Two days later, he had a finished recording.

A few weeks later I received a call from my mother, whom I had not spoken to in two years. She was calling from jail, saying that she and my stepfather had had a domestic dispute and that he had hit her. I did not quite understand why she had been arrested instead of him. She called me about a week later from a domestic violence shelter, and we started talking. Among other things, I told her about writing poems and songs. A few days later she called me and asked me to edit a poem that her roommate had written. The poem is as follows:

There are roses in a garden
But not in mine
I was always told by others
This would take time
No one understands the agony and pain
We all have different feelings
But honestly they're not the same
Torture, ridicule, abuse of all sorts
No matter how sorry
It all still hurts

I tried to edit the piece, but I found it impossible to make any one change without completely restructuring the poem. Instead, I decided to imagine being in that woman's situation and then to write an original poem incorporating the ideas expressed in her poem. I thought the following piece would be better suited as a song than a poem:

Roses Reach Slowly from Broken Earth

Wait for sordid scars to fade
Like cruel, cut vines in soil healing.
You can't comprehend my pain
Each of us has different reasons
For fleeing the torture and ridicule and leaving
The abuse of a home built of insults and loving
And trusting and cunning
And nightmares and beatings and dreaming of
One day's stability
And next day's uncertainty
And dozen-rose romance
And drunken-night violence
And treachery and safety
Apologies so empty
Heart-felt sincerity
"I love you." "You need me." "I'm sorry."
And so many kind words that heal me and scar me

CHORUS

Roses reach slowly from broken earth
Planted by shaking hands
Watered with battered tears
Small spark of hope in my sullen world
Sprouted from memories of better years

Considering I have had no experience with battered women outside of what I have seen on television, I was worried that my poem was not accurate. I sent it to my mother last August, but, as I have not spoken to her since, I have not heard her reaction. Dylan and I have yet to collaborate on writing any music to accompany those lyrics.

Upon returning to Knoxville for fall semester, 1999, I needed something to keep myself in good spirits despite feeling the stress of a new semester. I remembered those times when I had been giddily in love and so absent minded that I was constantly at risk of causing a car accident or tripping down the stairs. The memories inspired me to write the following light-hearted love song:

Love Can Kill You Dead

While cooking in love, your eggs get burned
While eating in love, you'll bite your cheek
On the way to work you'll miss your turn
Or drive the wrong way on a one-way street
Love . . . is a dangerous thing
It'll make you run red lights
And sing
Stupid songs,
And drive without headlights
Or leave the stove on

You filled me with desire
I set my house on fire

Love can burn cakes and toast and casseroles
Step into snakes and moats and sewer holes
I've never seen anyone step in a manhole
But worry that one day I'll fall down the sewer
By walking in love when I should be more careful
But thinking instead of a good way to woo her.

Love was the epitome
Of bliss 'til I got shit on me

Love . . . is a dangerous thing
It'll make you run red lights
And sing
Stupid songs,
And drive without headlights
Or leave the stove on

I felt so aroused
I burned down my house

After receiving the lyrics, Dylan said he was unable to create any music to fit the words, particularly the long lines, but he assured me that he would attack the endeavor from a different angle some other day. Either way, I had not intended for the song to be taken seriously, and I had not devoted a lot of time to writing it, so I was not too disappointed.

Having had my fill of playful writing with "Love Can Kill You Dead", I turned my attention to more serious efforts. I had begun the following piece a few weeks earlier on a Saturday night. I was supposed to be going out to dinner, and my date called to say she would be about an hour late. I tend to get agitated when things do not go according to plan, so I knew that I would have to do something to keep myself from getting angry and ruining what could be a

great evening. My solution was to spend that hour writing a poem about an ideal date. Consequently, I was in good spirits when my date arrived, and we had a wonderful time.

Weeks later, I decided that poem could be expanded to become an epic slam piece. I spent every free moment for the next week and a half writing and refining that poem until I had what I considered to be my best poem to date. Soon after completing the poem, I realized that since it rhymed, there was no reason why it could not double as a song. A couple days later, I was back in Smyrna and presented the poem to Dylan, daring him to write some music that was worthy of the piece.

Nothing More to Life

On my last day
I'll repay my debt to this world
I've stayed past my welcome
It's time to check out
Of my death bed motel room
No vacancy
There'll be no time for reproach
I'll see life unfold
I will watch death approach . . .
Through the light of nostalgia

Of cobalt blue dreams
Of goals achieved
Of memories
And wishes
Of the best things
Like the kisses

All the different kinds of kisses
Blind lips reaching
For complements
In darkness
And kindergarten kisses
So innocent
So honest

Like those 5 a.m. kisses
Can't tell if you're dreaming
When love clouds the boundary 'tween waking and sleeping
And second date kisses when you know this will work
And long good-bye kisses when you fear for the worst
Or the luscious allure of hot swallowed tongue kisses
Natural, primordial, penetrating, lush rhythms
Of breath

Or the crisp kiss
Of smothering grandmother's kisses
Bridging the distance
'Tween wisdom and innocence
With a pinch on the cheek
For emphasis
And her last kiss
I'm the axis
Between her death
And that first breath
That one day my child will change the world with
And that first kiss
I want to remember the whole thing.

From the first sleepless weeks
To the taste of those cheeks
Those everyday tears
Of skinned knees and young fears
To kiss and make better
I want to remember
Everything I never learned about growing up
How a kiss *is* love
With all its complexities
And none of its jealousies
I'll take comfort in memories

I'll take comfort in memories
Of parting-morning kisses
Can't wait to see you again
Fresh picked daisies
Cherished
From that perfect date
Fragrance
Of orchids and peaches
Dripping
From candlelight kisses
Melting into moonbeams
And stargazing wishes
And plum wine
Until sunrise epiphanies
Row boat ride
In the morning mist breeze
Brushing smiles on our faces
Night-long conversations
Shared in silent eyes
In a smooth, slow glance
Knowing there's nothing more to life
Than a true romance

Oh, if such a date existed outside of poems and promises
I swear I'd take you on it
But there's never enough room
Between overtime
And business dates
And soon
I'll be old and dying
With no consolation
Save "I'm sorry; it's too late."

But when I have that one last kiss
That endless kiss
That one last breath
That kiss of death
That thought that lingers
Imprinted forever
Like salvation's face
Interred in a shroud
I won't think of darkness
Or godless uncertainty
No questions of fate
There's no time for doubt
When I face my end
That one certain truth
I'll think of your lips
That elusive, parting-morning kiss
We never had . . .
I'll think of you.

I gave him the lyrics on a Saturday afternoon, and we sat down to collaborate that evening. Until then, Dylan had been solely responsible for writing the music, but this time I was not going to leave anything open to interpretation. I had to make sure that he accurately captured the rhythm and emotion of every line.

I knew that we would have to be at our most creative, so I brought with me a liter of Bacardi and only two liters of Coke, which meant that the drinks would have to be strong. I poured the first round, and we dove into the first stanza, not knowing where our ideas would take us but anxious to get there. I had no idea what shape the music would take, but I was reassured by a feeling of mutual confidence. I was at a serious disadvantage, though, for Dylan had a guitar to keep his hands occupied, but all I had was a glass of rum and coke, mixed half and half—a dangerous situation. In the time it took me to polish off that first drink, we finished the first three stanzas. The momentum was on our side, and I had to mix another drink.

When I sat back down, Dylan pulled out what he called his “sweetest chords” and asked me which verse deserved them. “The verse about the perfect date, of course.” He began with a strum and an a cappella crooning of the first line and rolled into a soft, flowing melody that captured exactly what I was trying to say, but he was worried about misinterpreting my lyrics and hesitated. I did not want him to break the creative flow, so I assured him, “You got it, man. Sing on, brother!” As the stanza unfolded, I could suggest only a few minor changes. All I could really contribute was to reassure Dylan that he was doing things right and to sit back contentedly, smiling a smug, drunken grin and nodding my approval in rhythm. As he flowed through each line, I thought, “I’ll drink to that,” and my glass was soon empty, but I did not get up to fill it. I did not want to miss a moment of this magical transformation; I did not want to interrupt the flow. With each completed line, he gained intensity and emotion. By the time he reached the last few lines, he had picked up incredible momentum. He reached the last line, repeated it twice, and I pressed on, “Back to the top; keep the rhythm,” and he sling-shot back to the first

line. He played that stanza at least five or six times continuously, each time a different variation, but each variation equally good.

The rest of the song did not come with such incredible ease, but, nevertheless, a couple hours later we had appropriate music to go with every line of the three-page piece, and the rum was nearly finished. Sometimes I write a poem that seems fantastic when I write it but turns out to be rubbish when I read it later. The morning after helping Dylan write "One Last Kiss", I could still remember the entire song, but the only thing I regretted was drinking all that rum.

During the summer I had started writing a purely fictitious piece which would later be called "Ephemeral Landscape." Like "One Last Kiss", I had intended it to be a rhythmic slam piece but realized that it could double as a song. I spent the rest of September finishing that poem, but it was time well spent. I do not know how well this poem rates on an absolute poetry scale, but it is the best in my body of works.

Ephemeral Landscape

On the ephemeral landscape
Of dreams
I sit sleepless in love in Paris at midnight
By the Seine
Nocturnal insanity
Drowning the sight of my cloud-covered mind's eye
Like the rain
That wets slow steps
Of sleepwalkers wandering
A sacrificial flow
Gift
For the river I'm pondering
While Jim Morrison's bones give
A baritone sigh
And sing to me mournfully
Of a "moonlight drive."

And the moon
Perks its ears at this melancholy tune
Like some dreamtime cue
Peers down through night sky
Shines pure in my eyes
Like crystal
Clears clouds from hindsight
(This must be a dream)
But the steam from the cobblestone air
Feels more real than some apparition
The beat of the heel step boots approaching
Resounds more distinctly than any I could imagine.
The misty advance of this angel approaching
Is far more perfect than any I could imagine.

I'd seen her before
The ageless, nameless woman of my dreams
No more than a whisper's distance from me
My destiny within reach
Like so many other dreams
But no less exciting
She was picturesque in indigo
Yet dangerous like lightning
Stopped somewhere between Van Gogh's
Blue moonlight and irises,
Cool violet like her eyes
I wanted to dive into
Like deadly electricity
That beckons you to touch it
A universe of energy
Manifested in flesh
{Just one step closer}
I'm torn between compulsion
And composure and regret

So I take that step
Closer
Closer than her fragrance of indigo irises
Closer
Closer than warm breaths and heart beats and timelessness

(This must be a dream)
(This must be a dream)
(This must be a dream)

Closer

As close as the heat
That heat of insanity
So lively and dancing
In motions and capturing
The rapture and madness
Of a hot feel like slow sex
This can't be real, I know this
But I'm too entranced to notice
So I lean for just one kiss
And wake up to nothing

Nothing but a feeling
Of dubious longings
Of unfulfilled fantasies
Of lack of faith almost's
And nearly's and maybe's
And nothing but taunting temptation and regretting
Just me cold alone in my bed scared and sweating
From one of several thousand broken hearted dreams
With different plots and settings
But the same theme
The same me
Fool who goes to sleep
Knowing what awaits him
And waking
From his nightly unrest
Afflicted with obsession
But refreshed
Addicted to the poison

I sent Dylan a written copy of "Ephemeral Landscape" as well as a tape recording of me reading it, but he and I would have to wait to write the music, for we first had to work out the details of my October 13 senior project presentation, which turned out well, incidentally.

After the presentation, we were able to spend the next day working on new pieces. We finally wrote music for both the verses and chorus of "Fool's Gold Desire". The only problem was that the verses and the chorus sounded too similar. (I am currently trying to adapt a few bars of Smetana's "The Moldau" to serve as the chorus.)

When I returned home for fall break, I went to Dylan's house to see what progress we could make with "Ephemeral Landscape." Dylan had moved since our last collaboration, but when I opened his freezer, I was horrified to find that one thing had not changed—the Bacardi was still there. I hurriedly shut the freezer to avoid being traumatized by the sight of that poison, and we started working. By the end of the night, we had written music to go with most of the lyrics, and I knew right then that this song would be the main feature of my final presentation.

It was not until Thanksgiving break, the Saturday before my final presentation, that Dylan and I had a chance to finish writing the music to "Ephemeral Landscape." To make matters worse, Dylan found that he would not be able to get off work to play at my presentation, so he would have to make a recording before I returned to Knoxville the following evening. Gaelyn would be getting up early the next morning, so he had only one night to make the recording. Dylan stayed up all night and made a commendable recording, considering the circumstances.

I wrote this last song during exam week of fall semester as something to pass the time. Dylan and I have not begun to write any music for it.

All Used Up

CHORUS

I'm a second thought, backward glance, smile in her hindsight
"Love to chat but haven't time;
Maybe next time baby"
Says she needs me
Yeah, she needs me to stand on in the limelight

(I'm) yesterday's flavor
Leftover dinner
Chewed up and shit out
Found out
She's got bigger fish to fry
That's why
I'm on the back burner
Waiting for my turn to
Be reheated
And eaten . . . at best
But probably to be
Discarded from the kitchen
No longer tasteful
Forgotten like the kitten
That's no longer playful

I'm a Bic all out of butane
Baby's found a new flame
To kindle her passion
And then burn
I'm last year's fashion
Worn
Outgrown and out of style
And hung out to dry
Baby's found a new guy
A suit more her size
Someone younger and richer and more
 beautiful
Someone more useful

{bridge}

She's a ravenous consumer
I should have known sooner
She's a black widow vampiress preying on senseless guys
A rampaging pachyderm gobbling up all that's worth
Eating and then trampling everything else
She's so full of herself

As of the completion of this project, I have a dozen songs in various stages of production. Some are just words, some are in the acoustic guitar stage, and some have been recorded with a full ensemble; however, none of them are finished. If these songs are ever to be more than just files on my hard drive and homemade tapes in my glove box, there is much work to be done. Dylan and I will have to finish writing the music for the incomplete songs. For the songs ready to be recorded, we will have to get better recording equipment as well as music software and learn to use them both. Even then, with a fistful of demo tapes, we are not guaranteed anything. We will still have to land a record deal and gigs and a tour bus and a wardrobe and roadies and, finally, lots of women, for one must not forget my underlying motivation—to woo women.